



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service • Legislative and Public Affairs
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USDA RECOGNIZES PEST-FREE AREAS IN BRAZIL USING STREAMLINED PROCESS

WASHINGTON, June 6, 2008--The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) today announced its recognition of 20 municipalities in Brazil as pest-free areas for the South American cucurbit fly, a major pest of melons, under the agency's streamlined process for approving pest-free areas.

In response to a request from the government of Brazil to recognize 7 municipalities in the state of Ceará and 13 municipalities in the state of Rio Grande do Norte as free of the South American cucurbit fly, APHIS evaluated Brazil's survey protocols and its system to establish, verify and maintain freedom from this pest. Based on that information, APHIS has determined that those municipalities meet the criteria for recognition as pest-free areas under the approval process.

In July 2007, USDA implemented revised regulations pertaining to the importation of fruits and vegetables. Under these revisions, APHIS also established the framework of a notice-based process for approving pest-free areas in exporting countries. This process allows the agency to be more responsive in recognizing changes in the pest-free status of foreign areas. In the past, APHIS recognized changes in the pest-free status of countries via rulemaking.

Now, using the notice-based process, a notice announcing that an exporting country has provided information that meets or exceeds the pest-free criteria listed in the regulations and that APHIS officials have completed an evaluation of the request will be published in the *Federal Register*. At the time the notice is published, APHIS also will provide copies of the available supporting information.

The notice will be available for public comment for 60 days. Once all comments have been considered, APHIS will, if appropriate, publish another notice in the *Federal Register* stating that the agency is recognizing the areas as free of specified pests.

To learn more about the revisions made to USDA's fruit and vegetable regulations, visit APHIS' Hot Issues page at www.aphis.usda.gov and click on "more" then scroll to the Quarantine 56 link.

Notice of this action is scheduled for publication in the June 9 *Federal Register* and becomes effective upon publication.

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